# Protecting the Employment Status of Women

Committee on Equal Opportunity

National Education Association
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## Committee on Equal Opportunity

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## Democracy in the Profession

TEACHERS, regardless of position or title, are workers in a common cause. Efforts to capitalize the talents of all teachers thru curriculum committees and other shared responsibilities should be encouraged and extended. Teachers of equivalent training and experience doing the same kind of work should receive equal pay regardless of sex. Teachers should not be discriminated against because of race, color, belief, residence, or economic or marital status.—*1935 Report, Committee on Resolutions.*

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# Foreword

THE EMPLOYMENT status of women, particularly of those who marry, is passing thru a critical period. In many states there is a vociferous demand that married women workers be dismissed in order to provide jobs for the unemployed. At least eleven state legislatures have recently given attention to proposals designed to restrict the employment of married women. Most of these bills have been based upon the assumption that two persons in the same family should not receive salaries from public funds. At least one bill proposed to eliminate married women from all types of gainful employment.

Without in any sense discounting the seriousness of the unemployment situation, the attempt to discriminate against married women must be recognized as nothing more than a temporary expedient. It does not strike at the basic roots of the unemployment problem. There are studies to show that the average married woman is supporting dependents—often nearly as many as the average married man. If all married women were excluded from employment thousands of domestic servants would be thrown on the labor market and others would be forced to ask for public relief. The present employment difficulties are much too complicated to be solved on the assumption that the employment of married women is the fundamental cause.

Altho less critical at this time than the difficulties associated with the employment of married women, there are also questions involving the gainful employment of all women. Salary discriminations in similar positions are frequently made favoring men employees. Women are often excluded from important administrative and supervisory positions. These problems also merit the attention of organized groups of women.

For the purpose of throwing more light upon the foregoing questions, the Committee on Equal Opportunity sponsored the present survey of certain attitudes and activities of local groups of employed women. Thru the cooperation of the staff of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs an inquiry was sent to the officers of local units in that organization. One-third of the local groups responded with information. The Committee takes this opportunity to thank both the local and the national officers for their generous assistance. To the staff of the National Education Association the Committee is indebted for the tabulation of replies and the drafting of the present study.

HELEN BRADLEY, *Chairman*
Committee on Equal Opportunity



# Introduction

THE STATUS of women in the employment field and in the business world is one of the most discussed topics of the present day. Magazines, newspapers, and other publications frequently contain references to this subject. Some newspaper accounts of the more recent discussions appear under headings which indicate the trend of thought, i.e., "Women in Careers Defended . . .," "Youth vs. Age Argued by . . . Women," "Women Must Fight To Retain Freedom . . .," and "Men's Average Pay Is Twice Women's."

Writers may point out, as Pearl Buck has done, the lack of equality for American women as wage earners. She stated that women "have privileges but they have no equality . . . they are kept back by tradition expressed thru the prejudices not only of men but of stupid, unthinking, tradition-bound women." [1]

Other writers defend the point of view held by Grace Adams that American women have made fair progress in establishing equal rights and that while they have far to go, they probably will accomplish their aims and with the wholehearted cooperation of men.[2] Still others delve into the legal status of women.[3] Information of this kind is used both to support and to deny arguments that women have been discriminated against.

Various women's organizations are busy analyzing and trying to solve problems relative to women's position in the modern business world. Government bureaus and state governments make surveys which concern women. Individuals, both men and women, spend much thought and time trying to promote the "outside" interests of the feminine population. Not all these agencies and individuals hold the same point of view concerning equal opportunity for women with men in wage-earning positions. In fact, the differing viewpoints have brought sharp dissension to the ranks of some of the groups interested in the welfare of women. To one not informed of these varying theories and ideas may come confusion when trying to determine which of the theories is of most worth. For example, one group contends that the only way of giving equal opportunity in the employment field to women is thru an amendment to the federal Constitution providing that men and women should have equal rights.

Still another group looks to state legislation to straighten out discriminations against women. A large group of women think that either state or federal legislation designed to create equality by fiat would

[1] Buck, Pearl S. "America's Medieval Women." *Harper's Magazine* 177: 225-32; August 1938.

[2] Adams, Grace. "American Women Are Coming Along." *Harper's Magazine* 178: 365-72; March 1939.

[3] For some information on this type of work see the following bulletins of the U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau: (a) *Employment of Women in Hazardous Industries of the United States . . .*, Bulletin 6, 1919; (b) *The Effects of Labor Legislation on the Employment Opportunities of Women*, Bulletin 68, 1928; (c) *Women in the Economy of the United States of America*, Bulletin 155, 1937; (d) *The Effect of Minimum-Wage Determinations in Service Industries*, Bulletin 166, 1938; and (e) *State Minimum-Wage Laws and Orders*, Bulletin 167, 1939.

only serve to create confusion, prejudice, and misunderstanding. They advocate simply trying to change the attitude of people toward women who work by going about it gradually, using legal tactics only where necessary to remove obvious discriminatory legislation. Still others think that the attainments and capabilities of women cannot be measured in terms of those of men—that women should be educated for special work not necessarily in the same sphere with that of men.[4]

## Purpose and Plan of the Study

The principal object of this study is to ascertain, as far as possible, the extent to which organized women in business and the professions have contributed to the betterment of the position of women in the modern world. What particular success have they had in removing or preventing discriminations against themselves in gainful employment, and which methods have they used in carrying out these objectives?

The survey has been made by means of the questionnaire method. Since it was desirable to send the questionnaires to those women who would know something of woman's position in the employment field from the standpoint of the worker as well as the club member, the business and professional women's clubs were selected to participate in this study. The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs cooperated in the survey by mailing questionnaires and letters to over 1600 local clubs. The questionnaires were filled out and returned to the Research Division of the National Education Association.

The clubs were asked to give answers to questions concerning local policies regarding the employment of women, and concerning their own activities in eliminating or curtailing discriminatory practices. They were asked also to describe outstanding cases of discriminations against women as wage earners, and to cite the extent of their interest and participation in these cases.

*Regional classification*—In order to discover whether or not facts and opinions vary in different parts of the country regarding the status of women wage earners and methods of improvement in their status, the replies were grouped according to the classification used by Howard W. Odum.[5] This classification provides for six divisions, as follows:

(1) Northeast—Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

[4] For example, it has been said of women in the profession of occupational therapy, "The field is theirs." See: Stern, Edith M. "The Work Cure." *Reader's Digest* 34: 103-105; May 1939.

[5] Odum, Howard W. *Southern Regions of the United States.* Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1936. p. 6.



(2) Southeast—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.
(3) Northwest—Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.
(4) Southwest—Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.
(5) Middle States—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
(6) Far West—California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

The distribution of the more than 1600 questionnaires sent to each region was approximately as follows: Northeast, 15 percent; Southeast, 15 percent; Northwest, 17 percent; Southwest, 12 percent; Middle States, 28 percent; and Far West, 13 percent.

The 540 replies received represent mostly small towns distributed approximately in the following order: Northeast, 19 percent; Southeast, 12 percent; Northwest, 18 percent; Southwest, 9 percent; Middle States, 28 percent; Far West, 15 percent; and unknown, 3 replies which figure only in general totals and results.

It may be noted, then, that the Middle States received from about 11 to 16 percent more questionnaires than the other regions. Likewise, from this region came from 9 to 19 percent more replies than from the other regions.

## Summary of the Findings

Answers came from 540 clubs, about a third of those to which questionnaires were sent. Briefly and in general the answers indicated the following findings:

(1) The majority of the local clubs endorse the policy that women should have full, unhampered liberty in their choice of careers regardless of the economic, political, social, or other situations in their respective cities.

(2) All but 80 clubs reported that various discriminations against women in gainful occupations are opposed by the members of the clubs and that these members try to do something about such discriminations.

(3) The principal means used by the members of the clubs to influence curtailment or prohibition of discriminatory practices against women are: (a) by advocating legislation for the prevention of the practices, and (b) by opposing proposed discriminatory legislation.

(4) Of 462 clubs, 170 reported that women teachers suffer more discriminations than women in other fields of work; 160 reported that they suffer no more discriminations than women in other fields of work; and 132 reported that women teachers suffer less discriminations than other women wage earners.

(5) Reports from 65 clubs included accounts of outstanding cases of discriminations against women, involving the dismissal of women from jobs in favor of men, which the clubs considered unjust and

toward which the club members took a stand in their defense in many cases.

(6) Of those reporting, 350 described methods which they considered most effective in combating discriminations against women as wage earners. The methods named were as follows: (a) legislation solely, (b) legislation plus other methods, (c) education, (d) raising the standards of efficiency of women, (e) publicity, (f) protesting to discriminatory employers, (g) refusing to patronize places where employers discriminate against women, and (h) miscellaneous methods such as individual contact and persuasion, and patronizing women in business.



# Part I. Policy of Women's Organizations Relative to Gainful Employment of Women

The first question on the inquiry form sent to the business and professional women's clubs asked for information regarding their predominant policy with respect to the gainful employment of women. The following four items were listed for the respondents to check:

(1) That women should have full liberty in their choice of careers regardless of the economic, political, social, or other situations in their respective cities.

(2) That gainful employment of women should depend upon the general economic condition of their respective cities.

(3) That such employment should be restricted by such factors as the economic status of the individual's family, marriage, and age.

(4) That woman's place is in the home.

(5) Other (space was provided for the listing of other statements).

There were 527 answers to this question out of a possible 540, and most of these (490) indicated that women should not be restricted in their choice of careers in spite of possible adverse economic, social, and other situations in their home towns. Several respondents indicated that Statement 1 was their predominant policy but that other statements in the foregoing list were considered as a part of their general policy. Thirty of the respondents stated that the general economic condition of the respective cities should be considered when employment of women takes place. A like number would also restrict the employment of women because of the need for consideration of factors such as the economic status of the individual's family, marriage, and age.

Only four respondents stated their primary policy as "woman's place is in the home." This policy was qualified by the following statements:

(1) Where there are children and another wage earner.
(2) Stay at home to manage but work during vacations.
(3) If husband is able to support her.
(4) If the children are under six years of age.

Ten of the respondents cited various policies other than those listed in the questionnaire. Typical of these was the statement that women are adult citizens and should carry the responsibilities as well as the privilege of citizenship.

It follows that if the majority of the local clubs uphold the principle that women should be permitted to follow careers unhampered by legal or other restrictions, a majority would also oppose discriminations against women. Club officials were asked for a report as to whether or not they *actively* or by implication oppose discriminations against women as wage earners. All but 20 of those returning the questionnaires answered this request. The majority, as was expected, replied in the affirmative, but a surprisingly large number (80) gave a negative answer. It is believed that those who replied in the negative perhaps

meant that they do not *actively* oppose discriminations since most of this group gave answers to the succeeding question on methods of opposing discriminations and logically only those answering in the affirmative could reply to the succeeding question.

Classification of the answers by regions indicated that the largest number proportionally of clubs which do not oppose discriminations against women are in the Southwest region; the next largest number in this class are in the Northwest and the Middle States. The fewest number of clubs not opposing discriminations against women are in the Far West.

Do these results indicate that women in the Southwest, Northwest, and Middle States are less active in the encouragement and improvement of women's opportunities than women in other regions? Or, do they indicate that there is *less* discrimination in these regions than in others? Also, can it be assumed that suggestions apply inversely to the Far West states? That is, are women working more actively for women in the Far West than are those in other regions; or is discrimination against women more prevalent in the Far West states than in other regions? Case studies and comments reported in the latter part of this study answer some of these questions. However, they cannot give a final answer because of many factors, such as failure to report cases accurately, lack of knowledge of details of cases, reluctance to give specific information, and because some accounts are colored by personal prejudices.



# Part II. Ways in Which Women's Clubs Have Influenced the Elimination or Curtailment of Discriminatory Practices

There are many means at the disposal of women's clubs, and individuals as well, thru which influence may be exercised to prevent discriminations against women wage earners and also to curtail those injustices. The one means which has received most publicity is that of working for favorable legislation and opposing unfavorable legislation. In this field the most publicized legislation has been that dealing with wages and hours.[1]

A type of legislation that has been more in evidence since the beginning of the depression years and that has been watched and influenced greatly by women is that which would bar or limit the opportunities for married women in many, and in some cases, all fields. At present such legislation is being proposed or is pending in no less than eleven states.[2] The provisions of these proposed bills vary from the extreme of prohibiting the employment of any married woman whose husband is employed to the less severe provision of dismissing from state employment all married women not needing jobs.

## Types of Methods Used by Organized Women

One of the questions asked of the local club members concerned the ways in which they themselves had brought influence to bear in combating discriminations against women wage earners. Five means were listed in the inquiry form, as follows:

(1) By advocating legislation for the prevention of such discriminations.

(2) By conferences with business firms to encourage the adoption of a policy of nondiscrimination against women.

(3) By refusing to patronize places which discriminate against women in favor of men.

(4) By demanding evidence showing justification of a policy of discrimination against women in favor of men.

(5) By forcing, thru group pressure, a dispassionate examination of individual cases concerning victims of discriminatory practices.

The local club members were asked to check any of the above methods they use in combating discriminations, and to add any other

[1] The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor reported that at the close of the year 1938 wage laws had been passed in 25 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. See: Smith, Florence P. *State Minimum-Wage Laws and Orders.* U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 167. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1939. p. 1.

The objection frequently voiced to the minimum-wage laws is that when they are not made applicable to men as well as to women, the latter find it more difficult to obtain employment in competition with men. At present an amendment has been proposed in the District of Columbia to have the minimum-wage law apply to men as well as to women and girls.

[2] Editorial. *Journal of the American Association of University Women* 32: 172-74; April 1939.

Since this study was originated the Associated Press has reported that 20 states were considering or had considered such legislation as of May 28, 1939. See: *The Evening Star.* Washington, D. C. May 28, 1939. Part 5, Section F, p. 8.

methods not contained in the question but which they had used. Of the 540 who returned the questionnaires, 453 answered this question, or at least made some contribution in the space provided below the list of methods. Over 88 percent reporting indicated that they advocate legislation for the prevention of discriminations against gainfully employed women. In addition, many of this group also pointed out other methods as applying to their clubs. The other means most frequently indicated was "conferences with business firms to encourage the adoption of a policy of nondiscrimination" which was checked by 74 respondents. Methods 3, 4, and 5 were less popular with the local club members, only 50 or fewer reports calling attention to these as used by their clubs to oppose discriminations.

About 60 of those sending replies to the questionnaire reported methods used in opposing discriminatory practices in addition to the five devices listed. Following are the more frequently reported suggestions:

(1) Opposing legislation designed to be discriminatory.

(2) Emphasizing the fact that superior qualifications and efficiency should be the standard regardless of sex.

(3) By favorable publicity and presenting facts to the public as to why women work. Also calling attention to outstanding women who have shown ability in their work.

(4) By women making their work as efficient and dependable as a man's.

(5) Education at every possible point.

(6) By individual and group contacts and discussions with businessmen in the town.

(7) Individual boycott by members who know of the discriminatory practices.

(8) By encouraging and promoting the Equal Rights Amendment.

### Comments Relative to Opposing Discriminations

Some of the respondents described undesirable situations in their own communities in commenting on methods of removing discriminations against women. For example, one respondent replied that her club avoids the subject entirely because there is no agreement among the members. Another stated that the less the members said and did the better off they would be in that particular town.

The first-mentioned situation presents the key to ineffective work of a woman's club. Unless organized women can agree or at least feel free to have debates and discussions on sensitive problems, even tho such discussions become rather lively on occasions, then nothing can be accomplished by women for women. Many of the comments made in the replies called attention to the unhappier traits of women in their relation to their own sex.

On the other hand, equally bad situations have arisen when women have displayed an uncompromising militance that has had the effect of inviting belligerent male opposition to movements that would contribute to women's wage-earning opportunities. Comments from some of the reporters advised the putting aside of such attitudes in the best interests of all.



## Part III. Extent of Discriminations against Women Teachers

The officers of local clubs were asked whether the discriminations against married women teachers were more extreme, less extensive, or about equal to discriminations against women in other fields of work. The answers to this question almost inevitably represented opinion rather than the results of factual surveys. However, it is believed that opinion presents a fairly accurate picture, especially in the smaller towns where such information is generally well known to all the inhabitants.

Of the 465 reporting on this topic, nearly 39 percent stated that women teachers are more discriminated against than other feminine wage earners. About 35 percent reported discriminations equally great against all classes of women in the employment field; and slightly more than 28 percent thought women teachers were less discriminated against than other women workers. The number of the replies to this question when classified by regions, corresponds proportionately to the total percent of replies as classified by regions.

The largest number of respondents reporting more discriminations against women teachers than against other women workers were from the Middle States and the Northwest. A rather high percent was also noted in the reports from the Southwest.

### In the Northeast

Comments from the respondents indicated the attitudes toward women working for an income. The comments from the Northeast States were devoted principally to discriminations against women because of marital status. Respondents in eight of the twelve states (and the District of Columbia) in this region mentioned this type of discrimination. A rather typical reply is the following, from a Pennsylvania club: "Teachers are the one group that folks generally want to 'fire' especially when they marry."

Two other replies from this state are of interest. From one small town where no discrimination against women was reported, a respondent replied that she had found "to her disappointment" that men, on the average, give better service for the money spent than do women. From another small town came the report that that particular club does not especially favor the employment of married women, but does think each case should be decided on its merits.

Salary discrimination concerning women teachers was pointed out by club members in two states of this region. On the other hand, a local club in West Virginia reported that the attitude of the public toward married women in the town was very liberal but that perhaps teachers were discriminated against in that men were usually given all of the principalships.

Of significance to women seriously engaged in improving opportunities for women is a comment from a town in Massachusetts, where

a woman's college is located, to the effect that women are treated exceptionally well in that city. It was pointed out that women held positions there as physicians, aldermen, administrators in the Old Age Bureau, as school principals, assistant superintendents, policewomen, and schoolboard members.

### In the Southeast

Statements of those replying in eight of the eleven states of the Southeast region called attention to discriminations against women teachers because of marital status. One referred to this type of discrimination as applying also to local store employees. Reports from two others in the same state indicated conflicting points of view by two different boards of education. One policy was broad, excluding no qualified person from the profession, and the other policy barred all married women from the teaching profession in that town. Two other clubs in this same state reported discriminations against women teachers in respect to supervisory jobs and also reported the same type of discrimination against other women workers in one case. One Georgia club reported as follows: "Our local board of education recently removed discrimination against married teachers for which we highly commended them. . . ."

A comment from a club in North Carolina is of interest: "Women in low-paid office work seem to be the greatest victims of discriminations based on sex and marital status in this area. They are unorganized and have no way of combating this. Teachers have many organizations and exert powerful influence, but they do suffer discriminations because of marital status."

### In the Northwest

The respondents from the Northwest region commented very freely on the situations wherein discriminations against women occur. This is particularly true of those from the states usually classified in the West North Central area.

Replies from no less than thirty-five local clubs (twenty of these from the West North Central portion) indicated a great deal of discrimination against married women teachers as well as against women in office jobs and other types of work. One member gave the following ironical comment: "When a woman teacher marries her contract is cancelled, but when a man teacher marries, his salary is increased." Her next-door neighbor (from the standpoint of cities) reported that women in fields other than teaching were more discriminated against generally than teachers due, in part, to the varying policies of employers. In addition, attention was called to the age-old prejudices in that town against women lawyers, doctors, and other similar professions.

Possibly the most radical step in discrimination against married women was taken by a Northwest state, according to the reports, in dismissing all married women teachers in 1932.



Nine respondents of this region reported discriminations in pay for women as compared to men's pay, wherein the women and men were performing exactly the same type of work. A reason offered for this in one type of work was that women teachers equally as well-qualified as men teachers were willing to work for less money "in order to live at home," and therefore such a situation was difficult to combat since the support of those involved could not be counted on.

An undesirable situation for teachers recounted in one report from this region was that of a growing tendency against both men and women teachers with more than five or six years of experience.

### In the Southwest

According to the reports from Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, women teachers are most discriminated against in supervisory jobs. Other discriminations concerning teachers were reported as based on salary and marital status. One respondent stated that in all types of work in her town the salary scale of women was much lower than that for men where both are doing the same type of work equally well.

### In the Middle States

More than 40 percent of the respondents answering the question on discriminations commented further on the particular situations in their towns. The majority of these statements concerned discrimination against women teachers who are married. In about forty cases, rulings or practices of the local boards of education prohibited a married woman teacher from continuing with her work except as a substitute. Those already married when such rulings went into effect were, in most cases, retained in their positions, according to reports. This practice is also customary to a limited extent where there are similar rulings in other regions, That is, women teachers dismissed because of marital status are retained as substitutes, or they are frequently retained in regular service if they were married and teaching before the ruling went into effect. These restrictions concerning marital status apply to women in other fields of work, according to two of these heretofore mentioned reports.

As opposed to the conditions already described, two local clubs in different states reported that restrictions against married women teachers had been removed, one as a result of the action of club members. One reported that an attempt to dismiss all married women teachers resulted in dismissal of women teachers whose husbands were also in the city teaching service.

A typical comment regarding salary discrimination is that "there is little discrimination against women here except in the salaries paid." That the cause lies in the willingness of women to work at lower wages is pointed out occasionally by club members. That salary discrimination is inherent in men's attitude toward women working is also pointed out, as for example: "Men want supervisory school posi-

tions. Men want more pay for like work. Men want no married or single women working unless they are relatives. Believe that attitude of men is the same in other fields of work." A less emotionalized statement was made by another respondent in explaining that men receive more salary for the same work and obtain the better jobs because of "the *theory* that men must support families."

### In the Far West

If the comments of the local club respondents can be considered as indicative of the trend in attitudes toward women in gainful employment, it may be said that the state of California has a more favorable attitude toward women in gainful employment than have the other states in this area.

About half of the forty-eight reporting from this state commented especially on the local employment situation. The majority of these comments indicated little or no discrimination against women as wage earners. From a club in a small town came a report that the elementary schoolboard lifted its ban against married women teachers after having its attention called to articles in the *Journal of the National Education Association* and the publications of the California Education Association. The tenure law in California was mentioned frequently as protecting women teachers from dismissal.

A club in one of the large western cities reported the following: "After a long concerted effort women and men teachers now receive equal pay for equal work." Another club in the same city made a similar report but added that any married woman drawing a salary from tax sources was in an insecure position. At least a half-dozen comments included references to the barring of married women teachers from this work, and two or three contained references to discrimination on the basis of salary and executive positions.



## Part IV. Specific Examples of Discriminations Practiced against Women Wage Earners

An occasional reference has been made to the influence and activity of some local clubs in combating discriminations against women in the business world. In partially fulfilling one of the aims of this survey the questionnaire asked local club officers to recall any outstanding cases in their cities involving the unjust dismissal of women from employment. They were asked to give the facts in an important case, to describe whatever action was taken by the club members in defense of those suffering discriminations, and to state what effect the intervention of the local club had on the outcome of the case.

### Case Studies Involving Discriminations against Women

Of the 540 replies to the questionnaire, 65 included reports of cases involving the unjust dismissal of women from jobs. About 15 of these cases were too vague or general to be considered as specific individual cases of discriminations, for example: (1) "They just simply refuse to hire a married woman teacher," and (2) "Men refuse to place women in positions of higher responsibility or to allow them to direct the work of men."

In most of the 50 remaining cases, reports indicated that the local women's groups made some attempt to prevent dismissal of the individuals involved or to have them reinstated. Apparently they were successful in only 10 percent of the cases. In each of these cases the women involved were retained as a result of the club's actions in meeting and discussing with the employer the reasons underlying the proposed dismissal and other pertinent factors. Mere attendance of the local club members at one meeting where the dismissal of a club member was being discussed was sufficient to prevent the dismissal of the employee, according to one report. These cases represent situations in the Far West, the Northwest, and the Middle States regions. A typical account of these cases is the following:

> Six "under sheriffs" were to be dismissed by reason of a county reduction plan. There were 12 employees—6 men and 6 women—holding like jobs in this work. The 6 dismissed individuals were women. As a result of an investigation by the local club, 3 women were rehired and 3 men were dismissed.

### Cases Involving Dismissal of Employed Women

A few accounts of the dismissal of women from gainful employment, as reported by women's clubs, are given in the next paragraphs. The cases concern teachers, women employees of long standing, and others.

1. A music teacher, who had served the required three years' probationary period, was dismissed instead of being placed on tenure. Her work was more than satisfactory, and it was believed that a rumor that she was to be married prompted the dismissal. A man was employed—now on tenure—to take her place and has received a raise of $300, altho no other teachers received raises. The club members

contacted parent-teacher associations and taxpayer groups, as well as members of the board of education. The board agreed to reconsider and kept the matter under discussion "until the teacher was lucky enough to get another job" (Northeast).

2. A high-school teacher was dismissed on grounds of incapability, when the obvious reason was incompatability with her superior. A man was put in her place. The court returned her job to her after a year, during which time the local club appointed her president of the club (Northeast).

3. A circulation manager of a newspaper, who had worked very hard for fourteen years and had increased the paper circulation enormously, was dismissed on a month's notice. Investigation by the local club discovered the only reason for the dismissal was that "the job was getting too big for a woman to handle," altho the employer admitted satisfactory results thus far with the woman manager. The case has happened too recently for the club to have heard results of the investigation (Far West).

4. A city convention secretary was dismissed without notice after fifteen years of service. The reason given for the dismissal was dislike on the part of the employer for women who "knew more than he did." The local and state clubs wrote letters of protest, which did not reinstate the woman but did create an awareness among the citizens as to conditions. However, no assurance was given that future dismissal of women will be curtailed (Northwest).

5. A graduate librarian with eight or nine years of experience in one job was replaced by a younger person—a man with no college degree or library experience. She was retained as the young man's assistant at a reduced salary. Her duties are the same. No action was taken by the club members (Middle States).

6. A secretary in the note department of a large bank was discharged for no particular reason and her job was given to a man with a family. The fact that the girl was responsible for the support of her mother was not taken into consideration. The local club members protested against the dismissal and transferred their account to another bank (Northeast).

7. An executive secretary of a board of assistance, altho "under the merit system," was dismissed. Her work was outstanding, but because she endeavored to keep her organization out of politics, she was replaced by a man who had a more political point of view. Local club members expressed disapproval, but nothing was done since many women in the town "believe yet that the best should go to the men" (Northeast).

### Other Types of Discrimination

As is evident from the above-outlined cases only sketchy accounts were given and few of the important details. Other cases were stated



vaguely so that it is impossible to give more than a suggestion as to the type of discrimination most practiced against women.

Nevertheless, many of the comments of these 65 respondents indicate situations in their home towns that demand the attention of those desiring to better the employment privileges and conditions for women. These situations concern married women in a majority of cases—either they are dismissed or are made uncomfortable in their positions to the extent of relinquishing them.

One report worthy of note from the Southeast contained an account of proposed state legislation that would bar from public office married women whose husbands are employed. Because of the combined action of local clubs the bill was stopped before it was out of the hands of the committee. Other reports included reference to similar proposed legislation. Frequent reference also was made to political influence as responsible for some dismissals of women.

## Part V. Effective Methods of Combating Discriminations

Of concern to all, particularly women, are effective methods of curtailing or removing discriminations against women in gainful employment. Members of the local clubs were asked for their opinions on this topic. Of the 540 reporting in this study, 350 commented on or described means of combating discriminations.

### Combating Discriminations thru Legislation

About 21 percent of the 350 reporting on this topic stated that legislation is the most effective method of combating discrimination against women. A like number thought that legislation, in addition to other methods, would solve the problem. Most of the first group failed to indicate whether they were referring to the passage of legislation favorable to women or to the removal of discriminatory legislation; it has been assumed that they meant both, unless otherwise stated. Few of the replies included the suggestion that discriminatory legislation should be removed, and only one specified the need for proper protective legislation for women.

One minority group believed there exists a need for a federal amendment to insure equal treatment of women and men. An individualist in this group stated that women are their own worst enemies, especially when they expect their economic problem to be solved by putting married women back in the home, thus fostering one kind of discrimination against certain members of their own sex. Futhermore, it was stated that if opportunities or pay must be limited by various factors, then restrictions in all fairness should not be based on the ancient theory that men are heads of families and women are not.

The 21 percent which suggested legislation, in addition to other means for dealing with discriminations against women, enumerated many ways which should be helpful. About one-fourth of them believed that if women would educate themselves continually and be ready for responsibilities, and also help to educate the general public on why women actually work, much ground could be gained in bettering women's opportunities. Along the same lines was the thought expressed by a few that an important step for employed women to take is to do their best on the job and to cooperate with women for their advancement.

Fully as many as those recommending education pointed out the need for intelligent publicity on the contributions of women to modern life, on their role as heads of families, and subsequently on the fact that they do not work for "pin money."

Other recommendations proposed conferences with employers, organized protest, and refusal to patronize places that discriminate against women. An occasional reply represented the opinion of the married woman who has no desire to work and believes that every



married woman at work is an obstacle to the success of her own husband.

A report from one organization in the Far West contained a reference to an effective means of getting the support of more women in opposing legislation discriminatory to married women. This method was to acquaint the various women's groups of the far-reaching effects of such legislation, such as the exclusion of women from commissions and boards which carry any compensation. This report also stated that any case of discrimination investigated by that club was carefully studied in order to get *all* the facts and, therefore, any conferences with business administrators were conducted with intelligence and purpose.

### Education and Higher Standards of Efficiency

Since education and higher standards of efficiency should go hand-in-hand, these two topics as dealt with in the reports from women's clubs are discussed together here.

More than 24 percent of the replies containing information on how to deal with discriminations against women urged greater emphasis on educating women, on "educating the public," and on women proving their ability to do as well or better than men in their work.

The opinion of many respondents was that if women are to fight discriminations seriously they must make themselves valuable in business and they must be more ambitious for the higher bracket jobs, both of which are dependent on a background of thoro education and professional training. Other kinds of education recommended are as follows:

(1) Teaching women, particularly housewives, not to discriminate against their own sex.

(2) Educating the community in the facts concerning the need, as well as the logic, of women working.

(3) Enlightening the public on the many types of work women do that men are not especially interested in or for which they are not fitted.

(4) Educating the public not to look upon wage earning as a masculine prerogative.

(5) Educating women wage earners to conduct themselves with tact, patience, and an impersonal attitude; and to submerge antagonistic personal opinions and militant attitudes.

Some of the comments regarding higher standards of efficiency on the part of women are interesting. A few of these are brief and to the point, such as, "Let the women show that they do a better job!" Others are longer and offer suggestions, such as the comment that women should inform themselves on social, political, and economic problems, and take an active part in community affairs; that men appear to have no objections to women working if they are interested

in the business of the firm or agency, as well as in their own advancement.

Another respondent believed that women could do more to stop discriminations against their sex if they would only "stop harping that they are women and give the employer an opportunity to think of them as capable individuals." She, furthermore, criticized women who impose upon employers by doing less work because of the belief that as much is not expected of women as of men. Her comment continued: "In this town where men receive more pay it is because of more ability and more work . . ."

Others outlining ways of combating discriminations were also critical of women, for example: (1) "Quit trying to handle two full-time jobs," (2) "Train women to forget personalities . . . and become more businesslike and professional, and quit crying," (3) "Our club feels hostile toward women workers who are not sincere enough to be good workers —and who slack thru the job," (4) "More serious interest in work—less stepping-stone tactics to matrimony by younger women," and (5) "Women have ability but I believe have not learned to control their emotions sufficiently to command the respect that should be theirs. Difficult to organize them."

That women have a great responsibility in creating a tolerant attitude toward their gainful employment is pointed out in the following: (1) "Women will have to be twice as good as men in their jobs" (comment from Far West); (2) "A woman must do three times as much work as a man and three times as well" (Southwest); (3) "Prove ourselves worthy of the jobs and keep sex out of the job" (Northwest); (4) "Prepare themselves to fill well the best jobs in their profession" (Northeast); (5) "Continue to prove our individual proficiencies" (Northeast); (6) "Efficiency and up-to-the-minute knowledge of business in general" (Southeast); and (7) "Help competent women to find jobs and let them prove their worth" (Middle States).

### Use of Publicity in Combating Discriminations

Nearly 10 percent of those reporting on means of removing or preventing discriminations against women believed that various types of publicity would be most effective in this problem. Attention was directed to an abundance of channels—newspapers, radio, magazines, group discussions, and lectures—thru which women can tell the public why they work, or wish to work, or need to work. It was pointed out that facts and statistics on the achievements of women in various fields, on their contributions to society and industry, and on their training for jobs should be stressed in publicity campaigns.

One respondent thought that hindrances to gainfully employed women would be reduced if housewives were encouraged to broaden their interests and activities beyond the purely domestic ones. Still another believed women could exert a large influence by refusing to buy from discriminatory employers and by making that policy known to the public.



### Other Means of Fighting Discriminations

A few miscellaneous suggestions were offered in about 10 percent of the replies concerning this topic. These suggestions included such activities as protesting individually and in groups against the unjust dismissal or of a refusal to hire women, voting against those who discriminate, transferring business away from places where discriminations occur, and getting more women in public office.

The effectiveness of protest by women's organizations was challenged by one respondent who stated that most of them have "an axe to grind" when protesting and thus gain no ground in terms of permanent good. She suggested that if organized women protest, they must use a scientific and factual approach and discard prejudices.

### Miscellaneous Comments

Comments taken from the questionnaires sent in are included in this report so that a better idea may be obtained as to how or what women think about the subject of women wage earners.

One point of view expressed was that mothers with children should not work outside the home because they can contribute more to the good of the country by devoting their time to the training of their children to be good citizens.

Another opinion was that the economic condition of the country would be improved if fewer married women were employed. Along this same line were two reports (from small towns) that married women who hold good jobs and whose husbands have good jobs were discriminating against young high-school and college graduates, forcing them to look elsewhere for work.

Other reports indicated that the policy of clubs was not to interfere with cases when the issue of economic condition of the community is involved. One respondent doubted the interest of teachers in bettering their working conditions because out of a group of over fifty in that particular town only two belonged to the local club; therefore, the club took no interest in teacher discrimination.

At least two dozen replies contained the information that discriminatory practices are negligible and that women are treated fairly; thus, there was no need for club members to worry about discriminations. One of this group stated that her club was so active that the community was reluctant to arouse the displeasure of the members. Another said that altho jobs are scarce in her town "there is no squabbling." Still another reported that any woman in her town who forged ahead was encouraged and congratulated.

## Part VI. The Need for Responsible Action

This survey reveals some definite facts and, in addition, indicates to a degree changing trends in thoughts, attitudes, and practices in the employment world. The principal facts are the following:

Organized women want the right to follow careers if they choose. Even tho they do not all rush out to find jobs for themselves, they resent having imposed upon them any legal, traditional, or economic restrictions that would prevent them from getting income-paying jobs.

Women not only resent obstacles in the way of their advancement in employment but they also oppose them. This opposition has been most active where legislation has been proposed, and frequently passed by both state and federal government, which would prohibit or limit opportunities for women in the income-earning field. Possibly the most outstanding legislation of this type was the famous "Section 213-A" of the Federal Economy Act which barred those married women who had husbands in the government service from federal work, and which created such a furore that it was repealed. The repeal was the result of wide protest by both men and women.

Women have used their influence in the field of legislation primarily because they have believed the greatest accomplishments in bettering conditions for women lie in this direction. They have, in some instances, succeeded in defeating proposed state legislation discriminatory in nature. They are still actively working against such measures in many states.

Organized women generally protest against unjust dismissals of their own sex from gainful work, but are rarely successful in obtaining reinstatement.

### What Trends in the Employment Field Are Indicated by This Survey?

Whatever the cause—economic chaos, tradition, or prejudice—an undercurrent trend, now being forced to the surface, is very definitely toward threatening the position of women in the wage-earning world. This trend is more than a continuation of past discriminations. Women have not always succeeded in getting the same salaries for themselves that men receive for the same type of work, but they have made progress gradually in this direction. Employers have been slow about giving supervisory or executive jobs to women, but even here women have made limited advances. Therefore, it may be assumed that in these two areas women are not losing ground but are rather being forced to a standstill. In areas where married women are being dismissed and barred from employment all women are likely to have fewer opportunities.

### What Methods Are Used To Combat Discriminations?

This study indicates that organized groups of women have been successful only rarely in preventing or curtailing discriminations against themselves. Is it because they fail to use their most valuable assets



in this work? Should they not utilize their comparatively great financial power in obtaining more freedom in work for themselves? Do they measure success in terms of real service achievement or in terms of less admirable and less enduring monuments? Do they recognize and give credit to worthwhile work and contributions of women? Do they, in their own business dealings involving women, give fair opportunities to their own sex? Do women, in the role of employer, try to raise the standards of pay and achievement for women?

Organized women have adequate potential influence in the areas just mentioned and in others. They have not, so far, utilized it extensively or even moderately in the interests of their own sex. Perhaps they are not adequately organized for carrying out effectively specific aims, or perhaps too many women lack interest in current issues, the settlement of which vitally affects their living conditions. Most women, in accordance to their ability and education, have not accepted responsibilities and have not taken an interest in public affairs. Many have not taken the trouble to inform themselves of more than one side of an issue. If they are to keep what ground they have already gained in the employment field, and if they are to improve conditions for women, they must acquire a knowledge of current problems and working conditions, the ability to analyze accurately and judge justly and tolerantly, and a capacity for hard work. To this equipment must be added the cooperative efforts and understanding of men. When these factors are provided for, a good start will have been made.

### Need for Education

The moving force behind any gradual change in the social and economic conditions of a country, or in the traditional concepts of a country, is education of the individuals. This fact is well illustrated in the advancement of women in employment during the time that they have had access to more adequate educational training. This training, together with the encouragement and assistance contributed by men and the desire of women to forge ahead, has placed American women ahead of women in other countries, relative to freedom and employment.

Where can education best be applied to insure the continuance of these advantages for women? What type of education is needed to oppose the trend of thought which leads to dismissal of women from gainful employment?

Perhaps education is most needed in the economic and industrial area. Both men and women need to know about economic conditions of the country—the reasons behind the increasing desire to remove women from gainful work, and the consequences of wholesale dismissals of women which result in more dismissals when women return to the home to take over domestic duties. They need to know whether the dismissal of a woman from a position creates work for someone else, or whether it means the loss of one or more opportunities on a different level of occupation where, generally, employment is most

desirable from the standpoint of need. They also need to know more about the aims and aspirations of women as well as their employment potentialities.

The greater understanding one has of the country in which he lives, of the individuals who make up that country, and of the principal current problems affecting the individual, the more valuable he can be as an active member in a democracy. Education of the individual is necessary to give him this background. The schools should do their part. Beyond the limits of formal education, it is largely up to the individual to equip himself for the task of helping to solve controversial issues in a country where there remains the unaltered privilege of taking an active part in national and local affairs.



January 1939

## SURVEY OF METHODS USED BY ORGANIZED WOMEN TO PREVENT DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

*Explanation:* This blank has been sent to members of various women's clubs and organizations. The purposes of this survey are:

1. To discover the means employed by women, thru group practices, to prevent discriminations against them in gainful employment on the basis primarily of sex and marital status.

2. To obtain data on the contributions of women's organizations toward the improvement of opportunities and of employment conditions for women.

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I. What is the predominant policy of your organization concerning the employment of women? (Check one)

1. That women should have full liberty in their choice of careers regardless of the economic, political, social, or other situations in their respective cities (--------)
2. That gainful employment of women should depend upon the general economic condition of their respective cities (--------)
3. That such employment should be restricted by such factors as the economic status of the individual's family, marriage, and age (--------)
4. That woman's place is in the home (--------)
5. Other (Write in and check)----------
---------- (--------)

II. Does your organization, by active or implied influence, oppose discriminations against women in gainful occupations on the grounds of sex, marital status, age, or other factors?

1. Yes --------; 2. No ---------

III. In what ways has your organization influenced the elimination or curtailment of discriminatory practices against gainfully employed women? (Check as necessary)

1. By advocating legislation for the prevention of such discriminations (--------)
2. By conferences with business firms to encourage the adoption of a policy of non-discrimination against women (--------)
3. By refusing to patronize places which discriminate against women in favor of men (--------)
4. By demanding evidence showing justification of a policy of discrimination against women in favor of men (--------)
5. By forcing, thru group pressure, a dispassionate examination of individual cases concerning victims of discriminatory practices (--------)
6. By other means (Write in and check)----------
---------- (--------)

IV. In your city, what is the extent of discriminations against *women teachers* in comparison with discriminations against women in other fields of work? (Check one)

1. More --------; 2. Less --------; 3. Equal ---------

Comment ----------
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V. Have there been outstanding cases in your city or community, involving the dismissal of women from jobs in favor of men, which your organization considered unjust?

1. Yes _____; No _____.

2. If yes, briefly outline one outstanding case. _____

3. What action did your organization take in defense of the dismissed women? _____

4. What was the effect of your intervention on behalf of the dismissed women? _____

VI. What methods do you consider most effective in combating discriminations against women as wage-earners?

VII. Comment: _____

**Research Division**

***Please return reply to:*** **NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES**
**1201 Sixteenth Street, Northwest**
**Washington, D. C.**